

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-09 ISO-00 OES-07 ACDA-10 AGRE-00
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DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 EPA-04 ERDA-07 FMC-02
TRSE-00 H-02 INR-07 INT-05 IO-14 JUSE-00 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 NSF-02 OMB-01 PA-02 PM-04 PRS-01
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TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, UR, JA

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR HISTORICAL AND BIOLOGICAL
DATA CONCERNING THE SEAMOUNT GROUND FISH FISHERY OF THE
PACIFIC

1. SUMMARY: THE SOUTHWEST REGION, NATIONAL MARINE
FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS), IS EVALUATING THE POSSIBILITY OF
REVISING THE PRELIMINARY MANAGEMENT PLAN (PMP) FOR THE
SEAMOUNT GROUND FISH FISHERY OF THE PACIFIC SO AS BETTER
TO ESTIMATE THE MAXIMUM SUSTAINABLE YIELD (MSY), TO
CALCULATE THE OPTIMUM YIELD (OY), AND FROM THIS TO
DETERMINE THE TOTAL ALLOWABLE LEVEL OF FOREIGN FISHING
(TALFF) FOR 1978 IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FISHERY
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CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT (FCMA). BECAUSE ADEQUATE
BIOLOGICAL DATA CONCERNING THE POPULATION DYNAMICS OF
ARMORHEADS, ALFONSINS, AND OTHER GROUND FISH SPECIES
OCCURRING ON THE SEAMOUNTS AROUND THE HAWAIIAN ARCHIPELAGO,
AS WELL AS HISTORICAL DATA CONCERNING THE FOREIGN CATCH
AND EFFORT IN THIS FISHERY WERE UNAVAILABLE AT THE TIME
PMP WAS FORMULATED, THE FOREIGN CATCH AND EFFORT IN 1977

WAS RESTRICTED TO AN ISOLATED AREA AND TO LOW LEVELS UNTIL MORE DATA AND INFORMATION COULD BE OBTAINED. NMFS THEREFORE REQUESTS THAT APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

BE CONTACTED TO ENLIST THEIR COOPERATION IN OBTAINING HISTORICAL CATCH AND EFFORT DATA AS WELL AS BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION WHICH WOULD PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR A MORE PRECISE ESTIMATE OF THE MSY IN THIS FISHERY, AND FROM THIS, THE OY AND TALFF FOR 1978.

2. BACKGROUND:

(A) ARMORHEADS OCCUR PRIMARILY ON THE SEAMOUNTS NORTHWEST OF MIDWAY ISLAND IN THE HAWAIIAN ARCHIPELAGO. ALFONSINS ARE FOUND MAINLY IN THE WESTERN NORTH PACIFIC. ALTHOUGH MOST FOREIGN FISHING FOR THESE SPECIES OCCURS OUTSIDE THE U.S. FISHERY CONSERVATION ZONE, BOTH ARMORHEADS AND ALFONSINS WITHIN THE U.S. ZONE AND THOSE OUTSIDE THE ZONE ARE THOUGHT TO ORIGINATE FROM A COMMON REPRODUCTIVE STOCK.

(B) THE SOVIET UNION BEGAN EXPLORATORY FISHING FOR ARMORHEADS AND ALFONSINS ON THE SEAMOUNTS NORTHWEST OF MIDWAY IN NOVEMBER 1967. COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION FOLLOWED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, AS DID SOVIET SURVEYS OF FISHING GROUNDS CLOSER TO THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS, INCLUDING THE HANCOCK SEAMOUNT INSIDE THE CURRENT U.S. ZONE.

(C) JAPANESE TRAWLERS BEGAN HARVESTING ARMORHEADS AND UNCLASSIFIED

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ALFONSINS ON THE SEAMOUNTS NORTHWEST OF MIDWAY IN 1969. AT LEAST FOUR JAPANESE FISHING COMPANIES AND THREE GOVERNMENT OR SEMIGOVERNMENT AGENCIES HAVE FISHED IN THE AREA OR HAVE FIELDDED EXPLORATORY FISHING EXPEDITIONS.

(D) FISHING IS CONDUCTED BOTH BY STERN TRAWLERS AND LONGLINE VESSELS. ARMORHEADS MAKE UP OVER 80 PERCENT OF THE CATCH. THERE IS CURRENTLY NO DOMESTIC U.S. HARVEST OF EITHER SPECIES.

(E) ONLY VERY SKETCHY CATCH DATA ARE AVAILABLE. THESE INDICATE THAT THE TOTAL ANNUAL HARVEST OF ARMORHEADS AND ALFONSINS BY JAPANESE AND SOVIET VESSELS FROM THE ENTIRE SEAMOUNT CHAIN IS PROBABLY BETWEEN 10,000 AND 50,000 METRIC TONS (MT). HOWEVER, THE SOVIETS REPORTEDLY TOOK 133,400 MT IN AN 8-MONTH PERIOD IN 1969-70, ALTHOUGH THIS FIGURE HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED.

(F) VERY LIMITED DATA ARE AVAILABLE ON HARVEST LEVELS

FROM SPECIFIC AREAS WITHIN OR OUTSIDE THE U.S. FISHERY

CONSERVATION ZONE. FURTHER, THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO INFORMATION ON THE LEVEL OF EFFORT APPLIED TOWARD THE HARVEST OF ARMORHEAD AND ALFONSINS OVER PAST YEARS. BIOLOGICAL PARAMETERS OF THE STOCKS ARE ALSO UNDEFINED.

(G) PRESUMABLY THE SOVIETS AND JAPANESE HAVE HISTORICAL RECORDS OF THEIR CATCHES AND FISHING EFFORT ON THE SEAMOUNTS, AND THESE MAY PERMIT SOME ROUGH ASSESSMENTS OF MSY FOR GROUND FISH IN THE ENTIRE SEAMOUNT AREA. IF THE HANCOCK BANK STOCK IS NOT INDEPENDENT OF OTHER GROUND FISH STOCKS, BUT IS ONLY A SMALL FRACTION OF A LARGER STOCK HAVING A COMMON PARENTAGE, THEN A CONSIDERATION OF THIS BROADER PICTURE WOULD BE NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND THE STATUS OF GROUND FISH FISHING ON THE HANCOCK BANK AS WELL AS OTHER AREAS WITHIN THE U.S. ZONE.
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(H) NEITHER IN THE GOVERNING INTERNATIONAL FISHERY AGREEMENTS (GIFAS) THAT THE JAPANESE AND THE SOVIETS HAVE UNDERTAKEN WITH THE UNITED STATES, NOR IN THE FOREIGN FISHING REGULATIONS ISSUED PURSUANT TO THE FCMA BY THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE ON FEBRUARY 11, 1977, IS IT REQUIRED OF EITHER COUNTRY TO PROVIDE THE UNITED STATES WITH HISTORICAL CATCH AND EFFORT DATA OR BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION CONCERNING ARMORHEADS AND ALFONSINS.

(I) HOWEVER, SINCE IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED BY THE UNITED STATES THAT, IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH INFORMATION, THE OPTIMUM POLICY IS TO RESTRICT THE FOREIGN FISHING EFFORT FOR THESE SPECIES WITHIN THE U.S. ZONE TO AN ISOLATED AREA AND TO LOW LEVELS, IT MAY BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED TO COOPERATE IN PROVIDING SUCH INFORMATION.

3. NMFS REQUESTS THAT APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS BE CONTACTED SO AS TO ENLIST THEIR SUPPORT IN OBTAINING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

(A) DATA TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE FOR EVERY YEAR, BEGINNING WITH THE FIRST YEAR IN WHICH OPERATIONS WERE CONDUCTED IN THIS FISHERY, INCLUDING BREAKDOWNS OF CATCH AND EFFORT BY SEAMOUNT AREA.

(B) ESTIMATED TOTAL CATCH BY SPECIES TO NEAREST 100 METRIC TONS (MT) BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE U.S. FISHERY CONSERVATION ZONE.

(C) FOR TRAWL VESSELS: NUMBER OF VESSELS; ESTIMATED CATCH PER VESSEL, BY SPECIES; ESTIMATED NUMBER OF TRAWLS PER VESSEL, OR, IF NOT POSSIBLE, NUMBER OF DAYS FISHED; ESTIMATED INCIDENTAL TAKE OF PRECIOUS CORALS, UNCLASSIFIED

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BY SPECIES.

(D) FOR LONGLINE VESSELS: NUMBER OF VESSELS; ESTIMATED CATCH PER VESSEL, BY SPECIES; ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOOKS SET PER VESSEL TO NEAREST 1000, OR, IF NOT POSSIBLE, NUMBER OF DAYS FISHED.

(E) IN TERMS OF BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION, ANY INFORMATION AVAILABLE PERTAINING TO LIFE STUDIES OF ARMORHEADS AND ALFONSINS; REPRODUCTION OR FECUNDITY STUDIES; EGG AND LARVAE STUDIES, POPULATION DYNAMICS STUDIES OR INVESTMENT; CATCH AND EFFORT RELATIONSHIPS; AND, IF POSSIBLE, BREAKDOWNS OF THE SIZE COMPOSITION OF CATCHES. VANCE

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Message Attributes

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Subject: REQUEST FOR HISTORICAL AND BIOLOGICAL DATA CONCERNING THE SEAMOUNT GROUND FISH FISHERY OF THE PACIFIC
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